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Mary said, 'Let it be done unto me according to thy word.' (Luke 1:38)

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory... (John 1:14)

December 23, 2010

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Word that God speaks is life. It is always life. When the Word becomes flesh, it expresses God's profound desire to speak life to his stumbling and struggling creation, to *come to where we are*, to *become who and what we are*.

The Christian imagination has always been stirred by this great feast, by the belief that the author of all creation, the master of the universe, should choose to become small, to be carried within a human being, to be born like one of us. The early church writer Eusebius reflected on how Mary, for nine months, *entertained within her flesh the hope of all the ends of the earth*. The poet John Donne grapples with the paradox of Mary as *her maker's maker*; she is *the blessed one whose womb was a strange heaven, for there God clothed himself, and grew*. A medieval hymn speaks of Mary as the rose blossoming from the wintry earth of human history, and notes, *for in this Rose contained was Heaven and earth in little space*. The eternal Son of God, not contained by the whole universe, comes to dwell here, in the *little space* of Mary's body.

Just as Jesus was wrapped in swaddling clothes, we too are wrapped this season, wrapped in the mystery of the one who is all powerful yet placed in all fragility in our arms, wrapped in the mystery of God who is for us a hidden tenderness, a forgiving intimacy, our real home, our life.

In the nine months since we celebrated the Feast of the Annunciation, when I was ordained bishop, I have come to rejoice in the abundant ways in which Christ continues to come among us, and to celebrate the wonderful ways in which you - in your parishes, in your ministry, in your families - open your hearts and minds to the Word of life, and in so doing, bring life to others. In sending forth this Christmas greeting, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for all of the ways you allow Christ's light to shine forth; and I give thanks to God - daily - for the privilege of working with you, serving you, and proclaiming God's good news with you.

May the splendour of Christ's birth bring peace to our hearts, our families, our world. May the wonder of the shepherds and the song of the angels be ours as we approach the Christ child. And may the superabundant joy of Mary and Joseph, crouching before the one who is the Saviour of the whole human race, be ours to share as well. Wishing each and all of you a very Merry Christmas, and every good blessing in the new year.

Yours in Christ,

+ Donald Bolen
Bishop of Saskatoon